

"WORKERS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLES OF THE WORLD, UNITE!!"

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THE \$PIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

Signs of Christmas are all around us -- from Santas at Macy's to the sounds of carols over loudspeakers. But for working people and unemployed, the clearest sign that Christmas is around the corner is the pressure on and off the job rising to an all-time high: at work, it's speed-ups to beat the Christmas rush, while all remaining hours are filled with demands from all sides to "buy now, pay later". For workers and the growing number of unemployed, this call by the bourgeoisie to go deeper in debt comes during one of the worst economic crisis in the history of the USNA. At a time when many of us find it harder each day to feed our families, why are we being urged to dream of stuffed turkeys and silver cadillacs? What does Christmas really represent for the working class and the ruling capitalists?

The simple fact is that Christmas has become one of the most profitable industries of capitalist society. Every year workers pay out millions, in return for toys that are quick to self-destruct, worthless extravagant gifts that are expensively gift-wrapped, etc. And even though the economic crisis has had its effect on Christmas sales in the past year, the season is still seen by the bourgeoisie as a crucial source of realizing big profits. Retailers amass about 40% of their sales and profits during the holiday season.

Woven throughout the outright commercialism is the appeal to religious sentiment -- so that at Christmas, more than any other time of the year, we are reminded to be as meek as children (like the baby Jesus), to give generously (like the three Wise Men), to show nothing but love for our fellow human beings. The only catch is that the working class doesn't end up being on the receiving end of all this "sacred outpouring"! While we go into debt giving, the capitalists are gleefully raking in the profits. Our meekness and humility, meanwhile, serve only to give them more time to plan their latest assault on us.

Christmas is perhaps the best example of how the capitalist class uses religion for the purpose of trying to cover up the antagonistic contradictions that exist in a society run for the profit of a few at the expense of the masses of people. They loudly praise such so-called Christian virtues as selflessness, obedience, humility, the "Christmas spirit"; but our day to day experience proves to us that we're the only ones expected to put these virtues into practice, by submitting to daily exploitation and oppression without a complaint.

How clear it is that Christmas, too, is stamped with the brand of a class -- the bourgeois class! With our hard-earned dollars, we are paying for the yearly feast of the capitalist class as they celebrate yet another twelve months of their decadent, dying, economic system. Instead of giving in to the bourgeoisie's demand that we sell our souls for worthless junk on credit, let's make this a time for real celebration by struggling to build a genuine communist party to lead in freeing working people and those oppressed by capitalism from the tinseled promises and brutal exploitation of the bourgeoisie!

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WHAT'S INSIDE

S.F. Run-off Election	2
Class Nature of Fascism	2
USNA Military-Big Business	3
Oakland General Strike	4
Counterrevolutionary Alliance	5

S.F. MAYORAL RUN-OFF ELECTION

As Marxist-Leninists, we certainly do not want the working class to believe that elections in a capitalist society will make a qualitative difference in improving our lives. While they may provide short-range or temporary reforms, they can and often do affect the lives of working people in negative ways. A brief analysis of San Francisco's recent elections will demonstrate this.

First, the mayoral election saw no majority winner. Thus, Moscone, the front runner, and Barbagelata, the surprise second-place finisher, will face each other in a run-off. Moscone is presented as the "liberal, labor" candidate. In reality, he represents downtown wealth just as his reactionary, anti-working class opponent, Barbagelata, does. The approaches of the two candidates on the surface differ significantly. But, in the long run, how their plans and policies will affect the working class of S.F. will be similar. Both candidates want to suppress workers in the interest of the ruling bourgeoisie. Moscone will try to dupe the workers with small concessions and limited reforms. As well, he will try to divide our ranks by granting special privileges to a certain strata of the working class, keeping that group of workers indebted to and on the side of the bourgeoisie.

Barbagelata, on the other hand, is ready to attack the working class in any way necessary, even with outright fascist rule. He has already waged relentless battle against city workers and unions in his support of anti-labor propositions in the recent election. If he is elected Mayor, there may be no stopping him. Although neither candidate represents the working class, clearly Barbagelata is more reactionary and fascist in his approach. Thus, Moscone is the more desirable candidate merely because he will, if at all possible, slow down the onslaught against the working class.

Second, the results of propositions B, O, P, Q, and R show how bourgeois elections can be used to mobilize public sentiment against members of the working class. In the recent election, city workers, police and firemen, were the target. Subsequently, the election legalized political and economic repression against a segment of the working class; eliminating the right to strike by police and firemen, changing the crafts pay formula; taking away special benefits and even reducing city workers' wages.

(We do not want to give the impression that the police represents the working class, or in any way serves our interests. However, the recent election showed how even the police -- the armed agents of the bourgeois class and state -- can be made a scapegoat for city-wide and nation-wide economic turmoil, and be used as examples by the capitalists to further increase pressure on the working class.)

Democratic elections??? Not for the working class!!! In fact, the elections are fronts for legalized attacks on us. The only hope for workers is a political party that truly serves our interests -- a revolutionary proletarian party. Even when such a party is formed and workers' candidates appear on the ballot, elections will still only serve limited functions, primarily that of exposing the real nature of the bourgeois political system. We cannot change the real nature of the society through capitalist elections -- we must wage a relentless struggle against capitalism, we must overthrow it and build socialism. Only then will genuine democracy for the masses of people become a reality.

THE CLASS CHARACTER OF FASCISM

Fascism in power is "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital" (Dimitrov). Fascism is not a form of state power standing above class. Fascism is the power of finance capital itself. This class character of fascism must be stressed, because fascism has, under cover of powerful anti-capitalist slogans, managed to gain the following of the petty bourgeoisie and certain sections of the proletariat. No one, but the bourgeoisie, would support fascism if they understood its real class character and its true nature.

With the development of deep economic crisis, with the general crisis of capitalism sharpening, and with the mass of working people becoming revolutionized, fascism begins to emerge as a means whereby the bourgeoisie can maintain its rule. Fascism is needed by the bourgeoisie in order to shift the burden of the crisis on the working class, in order to try to solve the problems of the market by intensifying colonial oppression, in order to forestall the growth of the forces of revolution by smashing the revolutionary movement.

Fascism is the most vicious enemy of the working class. But unless the working class is organized, politically and organizationally, unless it has a communist party that is strong enough to rouse the masses and lead them in a decisive struggle against fascism, fascism will be victorious.

In the USNA today, the imperialist bourgeoisie is steadily preparing itself to institute fascism. The severe economic crisis, the general discontent of the masses of people, the international resistance to USNA imperialist domination -- all this increases imperialism's instability and leaves the bourgeoisie with no choice but to use open terror against the masses of people.

The danger of a new world war stems from the same conditions that lead to fascism internally. As the contradictions between the imperialist powers intensify, the threat of war increases. Today the struggle between the Soviet Union and the USNA poses the greatest danger to the peoples of the world. Their policy of "detente" is nothing but a cover for their fierce contention for world domination.

Working people in the USNA do not want to go to war. Nor do they want to live under fascism. To prevent both fascism and war, we must be organized. We must build a communist party which will lead a united front against fascism, a coalition of mass organizations for the purpose of stopping fascism. We cannot wait until fascism develops and then try to defend ourselves from it. We must prepare ourselves now so that we will be able to prevent fascism from developing.

U.S.N.A. MILITARY--BIG BUSINESS

Every hour \$10 million is spent on the USNA military budget. Even in this, a "peaceful" year, the budget will be \$90.8 billion. Since World War II, the figure tops a trillion dollars.

There are many reasons for the size of these expenditures. First, there is the capitalist system itself, which necessitates the establishment and preservation of world markets for its goods. Since about 1900, the entire world has been "carved up" among the imperialists, so that the only way to win new markets and preserve old ones is with military force. This is the era of imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, capitalism that is in decay and is dying.

Second, there is the particular role that the USNA assumed as "defender of the free world". No country built a more powerful empire than the USNA, nor a more powerful military to defend it. No major power emerged from the World Wars with such minimal losses. In view of the relative weakness of the other capitalist powers, the USNA military became the "guardian" not only of USNA imperialism, but of capitalism itself.

Third, war is "good business". It creates a tremendous demand for new goods and for heavy industry. War destroys the productive forces, which must be replenished. In addition there is a constant demand for more sophisticated weaponry. Business in general is stimulated. "Peacetime" militarism creates many of the same demands. Capitalism is dependent on militarism because it provides millions of jobs and generates billions of dollars elsewhere in the economy, as well as assuring capitalism's existence.

The USNA created the "red scare", in part, to dupe many people into supporting such mammoth expenditures. We were told that after World War II the Soviet Union was going to spring at our neck as soon as we disarmed. Yet no country was more decimated by the war, or had more hostile borders, than the Soviet Union. And no major power came out of the war as unscratched as the USNA.

Today the "red scare" is still being used by the bourgeoisie to frighten us. But it is the imperialists themselves who are scared. The Soviet Union is currently arming itself to the teeth, as is the USNA, in preparation for war. The Soviet Union has abandoned the path of socialism and has restored capitalism. The threat of a new world war between the Soviet Union and the USNA is daily growing as they struggle amongst themselves for world hegemony (domination). It is the imperialists who know they are defending a dying system, who are desperately scared by the main trend in the world today -- revolution.

Inevitably, the bourgeoisie tries to obscure the imperialist nature of their wars. They send their armed forces to do their dirty work while they keep their hands clean. But we know that the enemy is not the workers and soldiers of other countries. It is the rich parasites everywhere. Only by waging a revolutionary war against capitalism can we put an end to imperialist wars and create a socialist society where there is no exploitation and oppression. Of this we are not scared, only certain and determined.

"Imperialism will not last long because it always does evil things. It persists in grooming and supporting reactionaries in all countries who are against the people, it has forcibly seized many colonies and semi-colonies and many military bases, and it threatens the people with atomic war. Thus, forced by imperialism to do so, more than 90% of the people of the world are rising or will rise up in struggle against it. Yet imperialism is still alive, still running amuck in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the West imperialism is still oppressing the people at home. This situation must change. It is the task of the people of the whole world to put an end to the aggression and oppression perpetrated by imperialism.

--Mao Tsetung

OAKLAND GENERAL STRIKE 1946

The history of the USNA working class has been deliberately suppressed by the bourgeoisie, who would like workers to remain ignorant of their history. The ruling class would like to forget, and have everyone else forget, the great struggles of the working people for better working and living conditions, the strikes and demonstrations, the armed battles and revolutionary actions. But we will not forget! And our struggles will continue until all people are free from exploitation and oppression! The Oakland General Strike of 1946 was a fine example of what a united, militant working class can do. We recollect that strike which took place twenty-nine years ago this month.

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DECEMBER 3, 1946: Alameda County was virtually at a standstill today as a general strike hit seven of the county's cities. The general strike, one of five general strikes in the USNA this year, was called in support of the Retail Clerks' two-month long strike and in protest against the strikebreaking tactics of the police. 130,000 workers around the county laid down their tools in support of two simple demands: 1) that the stores (Kahn's and Hastings) bargain collectively with their employees and 2) that Oakland and Berkeley city administrators cease police interference.

The owners of Kahn's and Hastings department stores would not grant the demands and the great strike of Alameda County moved on. 10,000-15,000 workers at a time converged on Latham Square, where the stores were located -- shoulder to shoulder, blocking entrances to the two stores, pushing scabs back into the streets.

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DECEMBER 4, 1946: As negotiations continued, a big business strategy committee (including John J. Reilly, President of the Western Department Store chain) ordered the City Council of Oakland to give Mayor Herbert L. Beach the "powers of a dictator". These powers included the authority to set curfew laws, issue ordinances against blocking the sidewalks, assume full command of police, and request intervention of the state militia.

As Oakland lay under the capitalists' "state of emergency", 15,000-20,000 workers surrounded the department stores in pouring rain, singing: "I love the boss and the boss loves me; that's why I'm so hun-gar-ee!" Hastings was finally forced to close its doors, while Kahn's remained open for business, but without any customers.

Several hours later, thousands of union members and their families banded together at a meeting in the Civic Auditorium to hear the progress made in negotiations. A union representative declared: "The fight goes on! We're all in this together and we'll stay together until victory!" He was met with roars of approval.

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DECEMBER 5, 1946: The general strike which left the County of Alameda paralyzed for 2½ days is officially over. It was a victory for the 130,000 workers! The principal demand, that the department stores stop using police escort to break the strike, was met. By moving quickly and decisively, by moving militantly, and by moving in a unified way, the workers forced the capitalists to beat a hasty retreat.

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"Strikes teach the workers to unite; they show them that they can struggle against the capitalists only when they are united; strikes teach the workers to think of the struggle of the whole working class against the whole class of factory owners and against the arbitrary, police government. This is the reason that socialists call strikes 'a school of war', a school in which the workers learn to make war on their enemies for the liberation of the whole people, of all who labor, from the yoke of government officials and from the yoke of capital. 'A school of war' is, however, not war itself. Strikes are only one means of struggle, only one aspect of the working-class movement. From individual strikes the workers can and must go over, as indeed they are actually doing in all countries, to a struggle of the entire working class for the emancipation of all who labour. When all class-conscious workers become socialists...only then will the working class become an integral part of that great movement of the workers of all countries that unites all workers and raises the red banner inscribed with the words: 'Workers of all countries, unite!'"

--V.I. Lenin

COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY ALLIANCE

Due to the enormous super-profits acquired by USNA imperialism, the bourgeoisie has been able to permanently bribe the trade union leaders and bureaucrats so that many, with their large salaries, access to capital for investment and ownership of property, are no longer workers, but part of the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie. This alliance between the bribed labor leaders and the bourgeoisie is used by the bourgeoisie to propagate reformism. And when necessary it will be used by the bourgeoisie to help institute fascism.

There are many examples of labor traitors who openly collaborate with the bourgeoisie. Take George Meany, President of the AFL-CIO. With his enormous salary (over \$100,000 a year) and access to union pension funds, he operates and lives like a member of the capitalist class. The bourgeoisie knows they can rely on him to protect their interests over that of the working class.

Meany has consistently defended the capitalist system. Consequently, he has some influence in bourgeois politics and has been rewarded with various government appointments, such as the Advisory Council.

Another blatant example is Harry Bridges, President of the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), who has continuously negotiated contracts with a "no strike" clause. He enjoys a salary well over that of the workers he purports to represent. He is a desirable man for the bourgeoisie particularly because he had won the support of the workers in the militant struggles of the 1930's and 1940's.

Labor traitors such as Meany and Bridges openly lie to the working class and collaborate with the bourgeoisie. They tell us that the present economic crisis is not due to a system based on exploitation, but due to the leadership of the system. They want us to believe that the problems plaguing us can and will be solved. They want us to be patient in the midst of increased impoverishment and suffering. They will do or say anything to divert us from militant, revolutionary actions in defence of our interests. They are outright betrayers of the working class!

By pushing reformism and advocating support for the capitalist system, these "leaders" are playing into the hands of the bourgeoisie and its developing fascist rule. One particular reform in California which exemplifies this trend is the Agricultural Labor Relations Act which the AFL-CIO pushed through. The Act set up collective bargaining elections supervised by the state for the farm workers. Before and during the elections, there had been numerous reports of fascist attacks by the "vigilante" group called the Posse. The police did nothing to stop these attacks and even arrested some of the union organizers. Many of the workers have been fired from their jobs for supporting the United Farm Workers.

As the economic crisis deepens, the bourgeoisie has no choice but to step up its attacks on the working class and use these labor bureaucrats to assist in its deception and coercion of the masses of people. We recognize, however, that this permanently bribed section of the working class -- the labor bureaucrats -- are agents of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement. We must expose every move they make and most importantly we must make a decisive break with this entire trend. Otherwise, there can be no question of a serious communist workers movement.

WHO WE ARE

Workers' Press is written and published by the Marxist-Leninist Collective. We are a communist organization based on Marxism-Leninism, the science of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. We are part of the international struggle of the working class to end exploitation and oppression by overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism. We aim to bring communist ideas and analyses to the working class. We strive to broaden the outlook of fellow workers and to arm workers with proletarian class consciousness so that together we can lead the struggle against all forms of oppression and exploitation by imperialism. To do this we must organize ourselves into an independent political party to concentrate the resistance of the working class into a single fighting force. This newsletter will provide a link whereby advanced workers can attach themselves to revolutionary ideas and a revolutionary organization.

We want this newsletter to become a workers' newsletter. We therefore call on all workers to bring articles, announcements and letters to us. Correspondence, inquiries, subscriptions should be sent to:

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